

OUR COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST

NO. 2251

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;
for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”
Hebrews 5:2*

THE high priest looked Godward, and therefore he had need to be holy, for he had to deal with things pertaining to God. But at the same time he looked manward, it was for men that he was ordained, that, through him, they might deal with God, and therefore he had need to be tender. It was necessary that he should be one who could have sympathy with men, else, even if he could succeed Godward, he would fail to be a link between God and man, from want of tenderness and sympathy with those whom he sought to bring nigh to JEHOVAH.

Hence, the high priest was taken from among men that he might be their fellow, and have a fellow-feeling with them. No angel entered into the holy place, no angel wore the white garments, no angel put on the ephod and the breastplate with the precious stones. It was a man ordained of God, who for his brothers pleaded in the presence of the Shekinah.

Many of us, I trust, have a desire within our hearts to come to God, but we need a high priest, in order that we may draw nigh, one who shall be a man as well as God. We may reflect with joy upon the Godhead of our great High Priest. Inasmuch as it is His right, He counts it not robbery to be equal with God, but He communes with the Father as one that was by Him, as one brought up with Him, who was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.

But we ought also to be very grateful that we can come into touch with our High Priest on His human side, and rejoice that He is truly man. For thus says the Lord, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people,” He is anointed, it is true, with the oil of gladness above His fellows, but still He and they are one, “for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Those who came to the high priest of old, were not often of the rough sort. Those who wished to have fellowship with God through the high priest in the tabernacle or in the temple, were generally the timid ones of the people. Remember how she who came when Eli was high priest was “a woman of sorrowful spirit,” and the high priests had to deal with many such.

The sons and daughters of affliction were those who mostly sought the divine oracle, and desired to have communion with God, hence the high priest needed not only to be a man, but a man of tender and gentle spirit. It was necessary that he should be one with whom those with broken hearts, and those who were groaning under a sense of sin, would like to speak. They would dread an austere man, and would, probably, in many cases, have kept away from him altogether.

Now, the mercy for us is that our great High Priest is willing to receive the sinful and the suffering, the tried and the tempted, He delights in those that are as bruised reeds and smoking flax, for thus He is able to display the sacred qualifications. He “can have compassion.” It is his nature to sympathize with the aching heart, but he cannot be compassionate to those who have no suffering, and no need. The heart of compassion seeks misery, looks for sorrow, and is drawn towards despondency, for there it can exercise its gracious mission to the full.

Often, when we are trying to do good to others, we get more good ourselves. When I was here one day this week, seeing friends who came to join the church, there came among the rest a very diffident, tender-hearted woman, who said many sweet things to me about her Lord, though she did not think that they were any good, I know. She was afraid that I should not have patience with her and her poor talk, but she said one thing which I especially remember, “I have today put four things together from which I have derived a great deal of comfort,” she told me. “And what are they, my sister?” I asked. “Well,” she said, “they are those four classes—the unthankful and the evil, the ignorant and those that are out of the way.” Jesus ‘is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil,’ and He ‘can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,’ and I think that I can get in through those four descriptions. Though I am great sinner, I believe that He will be kind to me, and have compassion upon me.”

I stored that up, for I thought that one of these days I might want it myself, I tell it to you, for if you do not want it now, you may need it one of these days, you may yet have to think that you have been unthankful and evil, ignorant and out of the way, and it will give you comfort to remember that our Lord Jesus is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and that He “can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.”

On this latter subject, I would speak at this time, wishing to comfort some who are of a sorrowful spirit, and others who may yet have need of such consolation as this topic gives.

Notice in our text, first, *the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned*, namely, “the ignorant and them that are out of the way,” secondly, *the sort of High Priest with whom sinners have to deal*—One “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way,” and thirdly, *the sort of infirmities in men that may be sanctified to great uses*. “For that he himself is also compassed with infirmity,” is said of an earthly high priest, this it was that made him fit to be a high priest, and there are certain infirmities that we might almost glory in, for they enable us to be like priests unto God, and make us helpful to His sorrowing and suffering children.

I. First, then, let us carefully observe THE SORT OF SINNERS FOR WHOM OUR HIGH PRIEST IS CONCERNED.

While it is true that He is willing to receive all sorts of sinners, there are many who never come to Him, nor submit to His authority. With those who proudly and rashly stand before God on their own merit, He has nothing to do, but with others of a different character He is greatly concerned.

The people who claim Christ’s aim are generally *those who have a very low opinion of themselves*. Out of all the tribes of Israel, those that came to the high priest, to ask him to present their sacrifice to God for them, and to speak a word from God to them, were God-fearing people. No doubt hypocrites, occasionally, did come, and some of a proud spirit who trusted in their own offerings, but I should think that, all the year round, the high priest saw some of the humblest and best people in all Israel.

Men and women, in sore trouble, would come to him, and these chastened spirits would be choice spirits. Men and women who were conscious of sin, and longing for pardon, would come to the high priest, men and women who had not sinned after the similitude of a public transgression, who nevertheless felt evil darkening their conscience within, would draw near to him, men and women who had lost the light of God’s countenance, and who came longing to have it back again, because they could not live without it, would approach the courts of God’s house.

All these would be welcome visitors at the high priest’s door, and would receive his sympathy and compassion. Such are the people whom Christ our great High Priest now delights to bless. The proud and self-satisfied cannot know His love, but the poor and distressed may ever find in Him comfort and joy, because of His nature, and by means of His intercession.

As with the high priest of Israel in the olden time, among those who come to our High Priest, are *many whose fear and distress arise from ignorance*. Oh, dear friends, if all the ignorant were to come, we should all come, for we are all ignorant, but there are some who fancy that it is otherwise with them. They imagine they know all things, and professing themselves to be wise, they become fools. These

know not their need of the great High Priest. Their folly is proved by their light esteem of Him. But among those who come to our great High Priest in heaven, there are none but those who are ignorant.

In the first place, there is a *universal ignorance*. Notwithstanding all that great men may say about what they evolve from their own consciousness, I think that the only thing that a man can evolve from his own consciousness is folly and sin, for there is nothing else there. If he goes on evolving, he will evolve greater folly and greater sin, that is all. But when the Lord deals with men, He makes them feel that they know very little.

What do we know of sin? The larger proportion of our sins are probably unknown to us. We do them, and scarcely observe that we have committed them. And who knows the evil that lies in any one sin? Who is he that can weigh his iniquities in scales, or his errors in balances? Upon that one dread subject of sin, we are all like babes, we have not begun to learn more than the alphabet of that awful knowledge. Sinful we are, but it is part of the effect of sin that we do not know the extent of our sinfulness, and we should not know it at all, if it were not for the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

Again, what do we know of ourselves? Does any man truly know himself? "The proper study of mankind is man," says Pope. I am not sure of that, but I am certain that the proper study of mankind is Christ, for in Him we not only can learn about man, but much more besides. But how little we know of ourselves, of our natural weakness, of our evil tendencies, of our proneness in this direction, or in that! "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults."

What do we know of God the unsearchable? Is not He past finding out? Who can sufficiently tell of His nature, or of His wondrous attributes? Who can speak adequately of His greatness, or of His glory? Who can number up His years, or declare the whole of His lovingkindness? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" On this great subject, as well as on the other topics I have mentioned, there is a universal ignorance. As compared with the light of God, we are in the dim twilight. He that sees best only sees men as trees walking.

But in addition to the ignorance that is universal, there is also a *comparative ignorance* on the part of some, and because of this, the compassion of Christ flows forth to them. Those who are ignorant in this way, are the kind of sinners whom He has come to help as High Priest. He puts them in a class by themselves.

There are, first, the recent converts—young people whose years are few, and who probably think that they know more than they do, but who, if they are wise, will recognize that even by reason of the fewness of their years, their senses have not been fully exercised to discern between good and evil. You must not ask them questions about the deep things of God. They have to be satisfied with those blessed parts of Scripture where a lamb may wade, they must not meddle with those parts where leviathan has to swim.

Many truths are either above them or below them, much experience is too deep for them. In the presence of many of God's ways, they are compelled to say, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

The Lord Jesus Christ can take little boys and girls to His bosom, and He does so, while they are as yet ignorant of many things. He loves them, He teaches them, He has compassion on them, and He says of them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Christ receives them in spite of their lack of knowledge, and therefore we must treat such very tenderly.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones," for our great High Priest has compassion upon their ignorance, and He instructs them. "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children," when they trust in Him who sympathizes with them, and who cares for them.

Others there are who are ignorant because of their little opportunity of getting instruction. Are there not many who are so placed that they have little chance even of learning to read? We are thankful that

there will be few left of that sort by and by. But there are others who, if they could read, have scarcely sufficient time allowed them to read their Bibles, and who, when they have read them, are very much like the Ethiopian eunuch, in that they do not comprehend what they have read. If the question were addressed to them, "Understand thou what thou read?" they could truly say, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

There are many, all over our land, who are situated in places where they cannot often hear the Gospel, and when they do hear it, it is so mixed up and confused, that it is small wonder they cannot make head or tail of it. Constantly do we meet with persons of that kind, whose ignorance is excusable, for they have had no teaching. They have not had opportunities of reading and searching, as most of us have had, upon these our great High Priest has compassion, and often with their slight knowledge they show more of the fruits of the Spirit than some of us produce even with our more abundant light.

Further than that, there are many that are of a very feeble mind. You can only with difficulty get a thought into their brain, and if you try to get in another idea on the top of it, the second one seems to knock the first one out. They never learn much, and they are so constructed that they never will.

In our pilgrim band we have a number who are like Mr. Feeblemind, we may try all that we can with him, but we shall never make a hero of him. Others are like Mr. Ready-to-halt, with his crutches, he did dance once, you will remember, when Giant Despair's head was cut off, but still he had to go on his crutches even then, and he never gave them up till he crossed the river, then he left them to anybody that wanted such things, and I fear me, there are many who want them today.

We have those in our company who never will be able to give a systematic statement of the doctrines of grace, though they are full of grace. They could never explain how they were saved, but they *are* saved. I daresay the snail could never explain how he got into the ark, but he did get in, and these feeble ones are in Christ, though they cannot fully explain how they came to that blessed position.

Some of these good people are not very apt to receive knowledge, they are not "learnable," if I may coin a word to express my meaning. We cannot make them learn. They are willing to be taught, they are teachable, but they are not "learnable." Ah, well, our blessed High Priest can have compassion on the ignorant, and the feeble-minded!

Beside the universal ignorance of which we have spoken, and this comparative ignorance, there is a *sinful ignorance*. We have some who are ignorant, and no excuse is to be made for them, their ignorance is to be condemned, and if these words reach any who are thus guilty, I would beseech them to pray God to pardon their guilt, and cease to sin in this way any longer. I mean those who are ignorant for want of attention. They are so full of business, and have such a great many other things to think of, that they do not value the means of grace. They say that they cannot attend, but we know that where there is a will there is a way. Perhaps they go once on a Sunday, and never more all the week.

Now, if I had to eat one meal a week, and only one, I should want it to be a very good one, but I think that I should hardly be in a good condition for the next one the week following. It is a grand thing to get a little bit by the way, by coming on a Thursday night, or a morsel or two on a Monday, at the prayer meeting. This stays the heart, and keeps the soul in good order.

Some will never be much above the ignorant, because they have not the ambition to learn. They do not set themselves to study the things of God. They do not sufficiently prize the revelation of God. I pray that they may be stirred up to do so. Though they have been guilty of neglectfulness and forgetfulness, they are not to be deprived of the sweetness of this text. Our Lord can have compassion on the ignorant, and on such as are out of the way. Here stands the great company to which His compassion goes out, and its name is written, "*The ignorant*." I think that we had better all get into this class, indeed, I am sure that we had better join it, and thus obtain our Lord's compassion.

I have seen, at a railway station, gentlemen with first-class tickets walking up and down the platform unable to find a first-class carriage, and if the train was going on they have jumped in the third-class, so as to get to their journey's end. If there is any man here who does not think that he ought to be put down quite among the ignorant, jump in, brother, because you will get to your journey's end in this

compartment, and there is no carriage, just now, for any wise person. There is nothing provided in the train that starts from this text, except that which is provided for the ignorant. The Lord help us personally to rejoice that He can have compassion on the ignorant!

Now comes another description of the sort of sinners for whom our High Priest is concerned. There are *many whose fears arise from being out of the way*. The Lord “can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” I remember that, when I felt myself to be a very great sinner, and verily thought I was more of a sinner than anybody else, these words were very, very much blessed to me. I read them, “and on them that are out of the way,” and I knew that I was an out-of-the-way sinner. I was then, and I am afraid that I am now, somewhat like a lot out of the catalog, an odd person who must go by himself.

Very well, our High Priest can have compassion on those that are odd, on those that are out-of-the-way, on those who do not seem to be in the common run of people, and do not go with the multitude, but who must be dealt with individually, and by themselves. He can have compassion upon such.

But now let us look at the more exact meaning of the text.

To be out of the way is, in the case of all men, *their natural state*. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.” That is where we are all by nature, and our own way is out of *the* way. Therefore, Christ can have compassion upon all of us who come to Him, for He has learned to deal with those who are out of the way, and such, literally, are we all.

In addition to that, men have gone out of the way by *their own personal folly*. We had enough original sin, but we have added to that another kind of originality in evil.

*“Like sheep we went astray,
And broke the fold of God;
Each wandering in a different way;
But all the downward road.”*

But there are some who wander most foolishly. You wonder why they sin in the particular way that they do. There seems to be no reason for it, no motive for it, no special temptation in that direction, and yet they will do it. They wander out of the way by themselves. Have you done so, dear friend? The Lord can have compassion on those that are out of the way.

Some are out of the way because of *their seduction from the way by others*. False teachers have taught them, and they have taken up with the error brought before them by a stronger mind than their own. In some cases persons of evil life have had a fascination over them. It is wonderful how, in the cases of young men and young women, they frequently seem to not be themselves, but the evil embodiment of another. They are ruled and governed by the will of somebody else, and not by their own. Thus they are led out of the way. They are like sheep that “have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.”

Ah, poor friend, it is ill that you should have been the victim of another’s temptation! Do not blame your tempter, blame yourself, but at the same time, remember that Christ has compassion upon those who have been led out of the way. As by the will of another you were beguiled from the true path, so by the love of Another shall you be won back again, even as it has been with many of us.

Many are out of the way because of *their backsliding after grace has come to them*. Our text comprehends backsliders who were once in the way. To such we may say, “Ye did run well, who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?” Something has been an occasion of stumbling to such, and now, though sitting in the house of God, they know they are not what they once were, nor what they ought now to be, nor what they must be, nor what I hope they will be, even before I shall finish my discourse.

“Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married to you.” Why will you wander from the only source of good? “Take with you words, and turn to the LORD.” “Come now, and let us

reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” The Lord calls you in infinite tenderness, for He can have compassion upon backsliders, and stop them from becoming apostates, bringing them back to Himself, according to His divine purpose.

Others are out of the way because of *their consciousness of special sin*. Is there here anyone conscious of some great sin in years gone by? Is there a crimson spot upon your hand, which you have tried to wash out but cannot, some act of your life which you would fain undo, and remove? There it is, still there, always there. Does it fret you by night, and weary you by day, to think of the gross iniquity of yours? Ah, it has put you out of the way!

Perhaps you did not grasp all the consequences of what you were doing when you did it. Be comforted by this gracious text. Hear your High Priest pray, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” He pleads your ignorance. You “did it ignorantly in unbelief,” and while this does not excuse you, it puts you into the list of those who are both ignorant and out of the way.

Come to this compassionate High Priest, and trust your case in His dear hands, they were pierced because of your sin. Trust your iniquity with Him, His heart was opened and set abroad because of your transgression. Come, trust in Him. He died because of your sin. “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.”

Thus I have, very feebly, set forth the sort of sinners for whom Christ is High Priest, those who are ignorant, and those who are out of the way. This message is for almost everybody here, except my friend over there, who knows everything, and never did anything wrong. He does not want any Christ, and I will not bother him with one. “They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick,” says the Lord Jesus, and He further adds this word, which shuts out you who never did any harm, “I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” To be so very learned and so very good in your own estimation is no recommendation to Christ, but the reverse. He comes to men who need compassion, and those He teaches to profit, and leads in the way everlasting.

II. Having seen the sort of sinners with whom our High Priest is concerned, let us, in the second place, look at THE SORT OF HIGH PRIEST WITH WHOM SINNERS HAVE TO DEAL.

Now, if I go back to the high priest under the law, the type would be a fine fatherly man, whose very face invited confidence. I should think that all the people were glad when the high priest was very tender and compassionate. Possibly they occasionally had a high priest who was very high and very mighty, one who was very glad when his day’s service was over. If sinners needed to see him, he was not visible, and when he did talk to them, he was not very gentle. Sometimes he may have said to them, “Now you are stupid, you talk nonsense,” and when any of them were very sad, he said, “You ought to know better than to indulge this foolish nervousness of yours.” I think that they were not sorry when that high priest was taken from them.

But the pattern high priest was a fatherly-looking man, with love in his eyes, a smile on his face, one who had often sorrowed himself, one to whom all the people could go naturally. There are such men still alive. They are like a harbor for ships. Sometimes it brings a very heavy burden upon them, but yet they are happy men to have such a burden to carry. I think that some of those high priests must have seen a great deal of sin, and a great deal of mercy and divine love.

When the poor people went up to the temple, one would say, “I must go in and see the high priest. I have such a burden, and he will be able to help me.” Another would say, “No, I shall not go in, I do not need now to take up his time myself. Did not you hear him speak? What he said was just the very thing that I wanted. God gave him the very word that my distress required, and so I can go in peace.” But here and there one would say, “Ah! I must tell him. It does me good to unburden my heart.” Now that is the kind of high priest that we should all have wished for had we been living in those days, but our Lord Jesus is something incomparably better than that.

He is One who can bear with ignorance, forgetfulness, and provocation. How do I know it? Because He bore so wonderfully with the ignorance of people when He was here. It was with a very tender accent

that He said to one of His disciples, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" He had told them many, many times the same thing, over again, and yet He was not above repeating it, He had such compassion on them. Sometimes, He could not say what He would have liked to say, and yet He bore with the poor men who did not know the burden He had on His heart. He only said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." And when, after He had taught them, they still forgot, He did not chide them.

I never find that He turned one of them away because of their stupidity, He did not even cast off Thomas for his unbelief. He let them still linger about His person, despite their false notions and their forgetfulness. They must often have grieved Him through their ignorance, and through getting out of the way, especially when they got into the way of each desiring to be the greatest.

But notwithstanding all, our Lord was never like Moses. Of him it is written that the people of Israel "provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips," but never an impatient word came from those lips into which grace was so abundantly poured. There was never such a meek, and gentle, and quiet spirit as our divine Lord and Master possessed. I need not dwell on that, for you all know what compassion He had upon the ignorant sons of men.

Again, *He is One who can feel for grief, because He has felt the same.* When I have explained compassion as implying meekness of disposition, I have not given you the full meaning of the expression. Not only has our Lord compassion on the ignorant by being gentle towards them, but He sympathizes with them by having a fellow-feeling with them. They got out of the way and into the thorns, they wandered, and fell into a maze, they were lost on the dark mountains, but He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." Because of that fellow-feeling, He is always very tender and full of pity, and if He finds any of His children sorrowing, He has abundant compassion upon them.

Moreover, *He is One who lays Himself out tenderly to help such as come to Him.* He did so when He was here in body, and He is the same now, all His life was given in tenderness. You never find Christ throwing bread and meat to the hungry crowd as we throw bones to the dogs. He made them sit down on the green grass, and then He blessed the food, gave it to His disciples, and they distributed it in a quiet, orderly way.

And the Lord Jesus Christ has a very loving way now of helping His people. So tenderly does He do it, that the doing of it is almost as great a wonder as the thing that is done. He abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence, and we may each one say, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." Oh, He is a wonderful Savior! There is none like Him for sympathizing with us, and dealing tenderly with us.

Another thing I have to say of Him that never can be said of anybody else, is, that *He is One who never repelled a single person.* Not even the most ignorant, the most out of the way, was ever turned back from Him. It was always true, "This man receiveth sinners." And forever this word is settled in heaven, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

I have not time to go into this matter fully, but all who have read the life of Christ know what a gentle and tender High Priest He was towards men.

*"Now, though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor let His saints forget."*

His heart is on earth, though He has ascended into the heavens. If anyone here groans after Him tonight, He will hear that groan, and if the wish does not come to a vocal sound at all, but if your heart only aches after Him, He will feel that ache of your heart, and know what it means, and if you do not know how to pray, the very desire to pray He will interpret. He can have compassion on the ignorant. And if you do not know what you want, but only know that it is something that you must have or die, He

will give it to you, for He will interpret your wordless desires, and what you cannot read yourself, He will read for you.

But oh, you must have Him, you must have Him, you cannot get to God without Him! I pray that you will feel such confidence in His tenderness that you may come and take Him as your own High Priest, if you do, He will be yours at the moment of acceptance. He will never refuse the seeker. He will not hide Himself from His own flesh. He will never be distant and strange to any penitent sinner. If you desire Him, it is because He desires you, and if you have a spark of wish for Him, He has a furnace of desire for you. Come, and welcome. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. God bless these words! I pray that He may do so, to very many.

III. Now, I want to speak to those of you who are the people of God. I can imagine that some of you here are troubled, perhaps ill, and that you cannot get on as you would like in the world. You seem compassed with infirmities. I want to remind you that there may be a blessing even in your weakness, and that this may be the more clearly seen we will look, in the third place, at the SORT OF INFIRMITY WHICH MAY BE SANCTIFIED AND MADE USEFUL.

The high priest of old was compassed with infirmities, and this was part of his qualification. “Yes,” says one, “but he was compassed with sinful infirmities, but our Lord Jesus had no sin.” That is quite true, but please remember that this does not make Christ less tender, but more so. Anything that is sinful hardens, and inasmuch as He was without sin, He was without the hardening influence that sin would bring to bear upon a man. He was all the more tender when compassed with infirmities, because sin was excluded from the list.

We will not, then, reckon sin in any form as an infirmity likely to be turned to a great use, even though the grace of God abounds over the sin, but beloved friends, let me try and speak to some of you who wish to do good, and set forth some of the things which were sore to bear at the time, and yet have been rich in blessing since.

First think of *our struggles in finding mercy*. Years ago you had a hard time of it when you were seeking the Savior. I had, and I have always been very glad of it ever since. It was a long while before I could perceive the eternal light, and cast myself on Christ. I thank God that it was so, because I have had to deal with hundreds—I might say, thousands—in a similar case, and if I had found Christ, as many dear friends do, very readily and very easily, I could not have guided them, but now I can sit down by the side of them, and say, “What! have you got into the dark? I have been in the dark, too. You are down in the lowest dungeon, are you? Well, I was in the lowest dungeon of all. I can show you the way to where the jug of water stands, and the bit of brown bread. I know the way, for I have been there.” If you have not had a certain experience, you cannot so well help others who have, but if you were compassed with infirmity in your first coming to Christ, you may use that in helping others to come to Him.

Again, *our grievous temptations* may be infirmities which shall be largely used in our service. “What a blessing it would be to live without temptations!” says one. I do not believe it would be a blessing at all. I think that, being without temptation is more of a temptation than having a temptation. There is no devil that is equal to no devil, for when there seems to be none, we get so very quiet and so very easy, and think that everything is going on well, when it is not.

Be glad if you have been tempted. Remember that temptation is one of the best books in the minister’s library. To be tried, to be afflicted, to be downcast, to be tested—all this helps you to deal with others. You cannot be unto others a helper unless you have been compassed with infirmities. Therefore accept the temptations which trouble you so much as a part of your salvation to make you useful to others.

Our sickness may turn out to be in the same category. Of course we would like to be always well. I think that health is the greatest blessing that God ever sends us, except sickness, which is far better. I would give anything to be perfectly healthy, but if I had to go over my time again, I could not get on without those sick beds and those bitter pains, and those weary, sleepless nights.

Oh, the blessedness that comes to us through smarting, if we are ministers and helpers of others, and teachers of the people! I do not say that too much of it is to be desired, but the Lord knows how much is too much, and He will never afflict us beyond that which He will enable us to bear. But just a touch of sickness now and then may help you mightily. I have heard some brethren preach the Gospel in a terribly heartless way. It has been the Gospel, but it but it had been as hard as a Brazil nut, little children could never get at the kernel.

These brethren had never had any trouble or affliction, and if you have never had any, you may try to be very tender, but it will be like an elephant picking up a pin, you may try to be patient and sympathetic, but you will not be able to manage it. Glory in your infirmities, then, and in your sicknesses, for they shall be made useful in you for the comfort of God's sick people.

Our trials, too, may thus be sanctified. He that has had no troubles, and no trials, what mistakes He makes! He is like the French lady in the time of famine, who said that she had no patience with the poor people starving because of the price of bread. You can always buy a penny bun for a penny, she said, and therefore she thought there need not be any poverty at all. She was one of the rich ones of the earth. I do not suppose that she had ever had a penny bun in her life, or a penny either. Ah, dear friends! you must, if you are ready to help others, be yourself compassed with infirmity.

Our depressions may also tend to our fruitfulness. A heart bowed down with despair is a dreadful thing. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" But if you have never had such an experience, my dear brother, you will not be worth a pin as a preacher. You cannot help others who are depressed unless you have been down in the depths yourself. You cannot lift others out of despondency and depression, unless you yourself have sometimes need to be lifted out of such experiences. You must be compassed with this infirmity, too, at times, in order to have compassion on those in a similar case.

Herein I think that every one of us should try to make use of all his weaknesses. *Our whole nature as feeble men* may be turned to the noblest use if it calls forth our compassion towards others. Thank God that you are not a man of iron. We had the Iron Duke once, who did famous things, but in a different fight from ours. An iron preacher would need to have iron hearers, and then, I am afraid, that there would come a crash before long.

No, no, we must have our weaknesses and infirmity consecrated to God, and laid at His feet. Let us go, in all our weakness and infirmity, and try to help others who are as ignorant and as out of the way as we once were, and God blessing us, when we are weak, we shall be strong. When we are less than nothing, the all-sufficiency of God will be all the more manifested. Here I must stop, for our time has gone. May the Lord bless the word, both to the sinner and to the saint, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 4:15-16 AND 5

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—326, 367, 376

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